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030833Z Nov 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 002918

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SUBJECT: AFTER ACTION MEETING WITH MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND VIETNAM VETREANS OF AMERICA FOUNDATION'S PARTNERSHIP.

PASS: PM/WRA PLEASE PASS TO MR. ED TRIMAKAS (U)

1. SUMMARY: ON 14 OCTOBER 2005, THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE (MOD) OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (SRV) CONDUCTED AN AFTER-ACTION MEETING TO REVIEW THE RESULTS OF PHASE ONE OF THE LEVEL ONE LANDMINE AND UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE (UXO) IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND TECHNICAL SURVEY CONDUCTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA FOUNDATION (VVAf) FROM MAY TO NOVEMBER 2004. THIS ASSESSMENT, AND ASSOCIATED CLEARANCE EFFORTS, WERE SPONSORED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S OFFICE OF WEAPONS REMOVAL AND ABATEMENT. THIS AFTER ACTION MEETING WAS CONDUCTED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE DONOR, AS WELL AS TO INTRODUCE OTHER CONCERNED ORGANIZATIONS, BOTH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL, TO THE RESULTS OF THIS PROJECT. DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION AND MARINE AND NAVAL ATTACHE REPRESENTED THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN THIS MEETING.

2. ON 14 OCTOBER, THE MOD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) CONDUCTED AN AFTER ACTION REVIEW OF PHASE ONE OF A LEVEL ONE LANDMINE AND UXO IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND TECHNICAL SURVEY CONDUCTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VVAf. THIS PROJECT WAS THE PILOT PHASE OF AN INTENDED MULTI-PHASE EFFORT DESIGNED TO PRODUCE A NATION-WIDE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF ALL SIXTY-FOUR PROVINCES OF VIETNAM. ADDITIONALLY, A TECHNICAL SURVEY WAS CONCURRENTLY CONDUCTED TO CLEAR HIGH-PRIORITY UXO/LANDMINE CONTAMINATION PRESENTING AN IMMEDIATE DANGER. FOR THE PILOT PHASE, THE ASSESSMENT AND SURVEY FOCUSED ALL ACTIVITIES ON THE THREE MOST-HIGHLY CONTAMINATED PROVINCES OF QUANG TRI, QUANG BINH, AND HA TINH. APPROXIMATELY SIXTY PERSONS WERE IN ATTENDANCE AT THIS MEETING, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF SEVERAL FOREIGN EMBASSIES IN HANOI, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES, AND NUMEROUS MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS. THE HIGHEST RANKING GVN REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE WERE SRCOL HOANG KIEN, COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE MOD'S ENGINEERING COMMAND, AND MR. PHAM VAN QUE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR THE AMERICA'S DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

3. PHASE ONE SURVEY BACKGROUND: DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT (USG) AND THE GVN CONCERNING THIS PROJECT BEGAN IN 2001. A PARTNERSHIP ACCORD BETWEEN VVAf AND THE GVN'S IMPLEMENTING PARTNER (MOD) WAS SIGNED IN JANUARY 2002, BUT A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WAS NOT SIGNED UNTIL JANUARY 2003 FOLLOWING THE EXCHANGE OF 35 DRAFTS. VIETNAM'S PRIME MINISTER PHAM VAN KHAI SIGNED A PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN IN FEBRUARY 2004, AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT. EXTENSIVE DELAYS IN PRODUCING THESE DOCUMENTS CAUSED SIGNIFICANT COST OVERRUNS AND NECESSITATED ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR VVAf IN FY05 (APPROXIMATELY \$200 K). SURVEY TEAM TRAINING AND FINAL COORDINATION TOOK PLACE BETWEEN MARCH AND MAY OF 2004.

4. PHASE ONE SURVEY EXECUTION: THE PILOT ASSESSMENT AND SURVEY OF THE THREE PROVINCES BEGAN IN MAY 2004 AND WAS CONCLUDED IN NOVEMBER 2004. DURING THE PILOT SURVEY, MORE THAN 5,000 PEOPLE WERE INTERVIEWED (IN 344 OUT OF 558 COMMUNES IN THE THREE PROVINCES). MORE THAN 421 HECTARES OF LAND WERE CLEARED, AND MORE THAN 6,000 PIECES OF ORDNANCE AND RELATED MATERIAL WERE CLEARED AND DESTROYED BY TEAMS FROM THE MOD'S TECHNOLOGY CENTER FOR BOMB AND MINE DISPOSAL (BOMICEN).

5. DATA ENTRY INTO THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR MINE ACTION (IMSMA) DATABASE WAS CARRIED OUT IN DECEMBER 2004, AND FROM JANUARY UNTIL OCTOBER 2005, VVAf AND MOD COORDINATED THE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA, AS WELL AS THE CONTENT AND FORMAT OF THE FINAL REPORT. THIS WAS A PERIOD OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE PARTNERS LARGELY DUE TO DIFFERING IDEAS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE REPORT, THE INTENDED USERS OF THE DATA, AND THE RELATIVE SENSITIVITY OF THAT DATA WITH RESPECT TO NATIONAL SECURITY. CONSEQUENTLY, THE DATE FOR THIS MEETING WAS REPEATEDLY ADJUSTED FROM AN INITIAL DATE SET FOR MID-JULY. THE MEETING WAS FINALLY CONDUCTED ONCE ALL OF THE OUTSTANDING DISAGREEMENTS HAD BEEN RESOLVED TO VARYING DEGREES OF SATISFACTION BY THE PARTNERS.

6. THE PHASE ONE AFTER ACTION MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN LESS THAN TWO HOURS. FOLLOWING INTRODUCTIONS, THE COMMANDING

OFFICER OF BOMICEN, SENIOR COLONEL (SRCOL) NGUYEN TRONG CANH PROVIDED A POWERPOINT BRIEFING, DESCRIBING THE DESIGN, EXECUTION AND RESULTS OF THE PILOT PROJECT. HIS BRIEFING INCLUDED A HANDFUL OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE DISCUSSED FURTHER FOR POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION DURING PHASE TWO OF THE PROJECT. HE CONCLUDED HIS PRESENTATION BY STATING THAT THE PROJECT DATA COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO STAKEHOLDER'S AND DONORS FOLLOWING SUBMISSION OF A VALIDATED REQUEST.

17. SRCOL CANH'S BRIEFING WAS FOLLOWED BY COMMENTS BY SRCOL KIEN, THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF MOD'S ENGINEERING COMMAND, THE PARENT ORGANIZATION OF BOMICEN. SRCOL KIEN'S COMMENTS HIGHLIGHTED THE PROBLEM OF UXO/LANDMINE CONTAMINATION IN VIETNAM AND THE ENORMITY OF THE FINANCIAL COMMITMENT THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD TAKE QUOTE 12 BILLION U.S. DOLLARS UNQUOTE TO ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE PROBLEM, AND HE URGED CONTINUED U.S. FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

18. SRCOL KIEN'S COMMENTS WERE FOLLOWED BY EMBASSY DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION (DCM), WHO REAFFIRMED THE USG'S COMMITMENT TO PHASE II OF THIS PROJECT. STATING THE NECESSITY OF A NATIONAL MINE ACTION STRATEGY FOR VIETNAM, THE DCM OPINED THAT THIS SURVEY WAS AN ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP TOWARDS ACHIEVING THAT END.

19. THE DIRECTOR OF VVAF'S INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND MINE ACTION PROGRAMS (IMMAP) WAS THE FINAL SPEAKER. HE BRIEFLY HIGHLIGHTED THE UNIQUENESS OF THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VVAF AND THE VIETNAMESE MOD, BEFORE DELVING INTO A SUBSTANTATIVE ENUMERATION OF MANY OF THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PILOT PROJECT, MANY OF WHICH BUTTRESS ARGUMENTS CALLING FOR A MORE-DETAILED PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PRIOR TO PROCEEDING ONTO PHASE II. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE GOAL SHOULD NOT BE TO MAKE VIETNAM UXO/LANDMINE CONTAMINATION FREE, BUT RATHER TO MAKE VIETNAM IMPACT FREE FROM SUCH CONTAMINATION.

110. ACCORDING TO THE PUBLISHED AGENDA, THIS MEETING WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE ENDED WITH A PERIOD OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OPEN TO ALL ATTENDEES. HOWEVER, FOLLOWING THE VVAF REPRESENTATIVE'S COMMENTS, A BOMICEN REPRESENTATIVE INDICATED THAT THE MEETING WAS OVER. HE DIRECTED THE ATTENDEES TO ADJOURN TO THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OF THE MEETING ROOM, WHERE FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS COULD BE DISCUSSED OVER LIGHT REFRESHMENTS. UPON QUESTIONING, SRCOL KIEN INDICATED THAT BOMICEN HAD BEEN CONFUSED BECAUSE THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION HAD NOT BEEN LISTED ON THEIR VERSION OF THE AGENDA.

111. AS REGARDS PHASE II, VVAF HAVE PROPOSED TO WORK AGAIN WITH THE MOD UNDER A NEW AGREEMENT TO CONDUCT A FOLLOW-ON UXO/LANDMINE IMPACT SURVEY OF THE REMAINING SIXTY-ONE PROVINCES IN VIETNAM. THEIR ESTIMATED COST OF THIS PROJECT IS \$6.3 MILLION FOR THE SURVEY OVER A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS. VVAF AND MOD WOULD ALSO LIKE TO ADD A MORE SUBSTANTIAL TECHNICAL RESPONSE CAPABILITY TO THE SURVEY TEAMS TO IMMEDIATELY DISPOSE OF CRITICAL LANDMINE/UXO ITEMS FOUND DURING THE SURVEY. VVAF ESTIMATES THAT TECHNICAL RESPONSE CAPABILITY OF TWENTY TEAMS WOULD ADD APPROXIMATELY \$2.8 MILLION OVER THE SAME THREE-YEAR PERIOD. RECENT USDAO HANOI DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AUSTRALIAN AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AUSAID) INDICATE AN INTEREST IN SUPPLEMENTING U.S. SPONSORSHIP OF PHASE II IN THE AREA OF CLEARANCE.

112. COMMENTS: THE AFTER-ACTION MEETING WAS LESS COMPREHENSIVE THAN SUGGESTED BY ORGANIZERS. IT WAS A POSITIVE MILESTONE IN THE PROCESS OF DEALING WITH VIETNAM'S UXO HOWEVER, IF FAILED TO RESOLVE LINGERING CONCERNS BY MANY PARTIES ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT OF VEITNAM'S COMMITMENT FOR PHASE ONE.

113. LESSONS FROM PHASE I INDICATE THAT THE GVN HAS NOT YET FULLY SUBSCRIBED TO THE LEVEL OF MINISTERIAL INTEGRATION NECESSARY TO DEVELOP AND EXECUTE A SURVEY OF THE MAGNITUDE OF PHASE II WITHOUT A PROLONGED PERIOD OF NEGOTIATIONS. A PERIOD OF NEGOTIATIONS THAT EXTENDS BEYOND THE TIME FRAME ENVISIONED BY VVAF'S OPTIMISTIC SCHEDULE IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN COST OVERRUNS THAT MAY JEOPARDIZE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THIS PROJECT, AND SIMULTANEOUSLY DENY MUCH-NEEDED FUNDING TO OTHER WORTHY PROJECTS.

114. THE CHIEF OF MISSION'S FY06 COUNTRY PLAN RECOMMENDED THAT YEAR ONE FUNDING FOR THE EXECUTION OF PHASE II OF THE LANDMINE IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND TECHNICAL SURVEY PROJECT (\$3,036,798) BE MADE CONTINGENT UPON SATISFACTION OF A FIRM TIMETABLE FOR COMPLETING NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO THE ISSUANCE OF A GVN APPROVED PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND A LIST OF PROJECT DELIVERABLES. THE INABILITY OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS TO SATISFY THIS TIMETABLE WOULD LIKELY NECESSITATE A RE-EVALUATION OF THE FUTURE VIABILITY OF THIS PROJECT.

115. IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT BOMICEN DID NOT HAVE THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD LISTED ON THEIR SCHEDULE. THEIR RETICENCE

TO OPEN THE MEETING TO QUESTIONS PROBABLY INDICATES THAT BOMICEN FELT UNPREPARED TO ANSWER DETAILED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DESIGN OF THE SURVEY OR ABOUT PLANS FOR SUBSEQUENT PHASES OF THE EFFORT.

116. THE TIMIDITY OF BOMICEN TO ANSWER HARD QUESTIONS DURING THIS MEETING AS WELL AS THEIR CONTINUED APPEAL TO QUESTIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY TO POSTPONE DIFFICULT DECISIONS MAY NOT AUGUR WELL FOR ACHIEVING THE AMBITIOUS MILESTONES OF PHASE II.

117. FINALLY, WHILE MOD LEADERSHIP CONTINUES VERBALLY TO REAFFIRM THEIR BELIEF IN THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THIS PROJECT, MID-LEVEL LEADERS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXECUTING THE GVN'S INCUMBENT RESPONSIBILITIES APPEAR DECIDELY LESS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR OR NECESSITY OF PHASE II. THE RATE OF PROGRESS IN PLANNING FOR PHASE TWO BEARS CLOSE WATCHING TO ENSURE THAT U.S. GRANT DOLLARS ARE BEING WISELY DISPENSED COMMENSURATE WITH MILESTONES ACHIEVED.

118. THE MOD PRESENTATION AND ASSOCIATED VVAF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AS WELL AS THE FINAL REPORT FOR PHASE I IS AVAILABLE IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT AND CAN BE E-MAILED UPON REQUEST.

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